

VZCZCXRO9340
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #2021/01 1701153
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 191153Z JUN 07
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1769
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002021

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/18/2017
TAGS: [IR](#) [IZ](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PREL](#) [SY](#) [XF](#)
SUBJECT: DEPUTY SECRETARY EMPHASIZES LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES
WITH MALIKI

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

¶1. (C) Prime Minister Maliki told the Deputy Secretary that the hydrocarbon law and the de-Baathification reform law would be sent to the Council of Representatives this week and passed this month. He expressed doubt, however, that progress on legislative priorities would lead to a reduction in violence on the ground. Iraq's security problems, he argued, stemmed from the still-dangerous Baath party and a regional situation where Iran and Syria were backing armed groups inside Iraq and six Arab countries, led by Saudi Arabia, were actively plotting and fomenting violence, even in the Shi'a south. The Deputy Secretary agreed that the regional situation posed serious challenges and emphasized to the Prime Minister that progress on legislative priorities would send the important signal that Iraq's communities could deal with key issues through the political process without recourse to violence. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) The meeting took place on June 12 at the Prime Minister's residence. U.S. participants included the Deputy Secretary, Ambassador Crocker, S/I Satterfield, and PAO.

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Iraqi participants included Prime Minister Maliki, chief of staff Dr. Tarik Abdulla, advisor Sadik Rikabi, and staffer Gateh Rikabi.

Legislative Priorities: Maliki Promises Movement

¶3. (C) The Deputy Secretary asked the Prime Minister about legislative priorities, noting the strong interest in Washington to see progress on these priorities in the short term. "We will do it," the Prime Minister said, claiming that the hydrocarbon law and de-Baathification reform law would be sent next week to the Council of Representatives and passed this month. These steps "will not resolve the problem," the Prime Minister continued. "Our problem is a security problem. But these steps will give a message that the political process is moving for those who participate in it." The Deputy Secretary said that the U.S. focused on legislative priorities related to reconciliation because of a concern in the U.S. that U.S. troops were being caught in a sectarian war. Progress on key legislative priorities would show that Iraqi's communities were capable of dealing with critical issues through the political process.

Regional Challenges

14. (C) The Prime Minister explained that the regional situation was key to improving Iraq's security. He pointed to Iraq's long and open borders, Arab-Iran disagreements, and regional disagreements with the U.S. as problems that had to be addressed. Iran and Syria, who have "long experience in infiltration," were backing armed groups inside Iraq, he claimed, with Syria's aim being the return of the Baath party. A group of six Arab countries led by Saudi Arabia was also actively conspiring against the new Iraq, supporting political fronts and arming tribes under the auspices of opposing Iran but in reality contributing to disturbances, even in the Shi'a south. While the national reconciliation process was going well, the Prime Minister continued, care had to be taken about who was entering the process. "Al-Qaeda and the Baath party have experience with conspiracies," he said, explaining that some of the armed groups who claimed they wanted to enter the political process might instead be seeking to undermine it. The Deputy Secretary agreed that Iraq faced serious external challenges,

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adding that the U.S. and Iraq had to work closely together to push Syria to control its borders.

Baath Party, Not Sectarian Problems, Root Cause of Violence

15. (C) Returning to the Deputy Secretary's comment about concern in the U.S. on sectarian violence, the Prime Minister argued that Iraq's security problems were not sectarian in nature. There were different viewpoints among those involved in the political process on questions such as federalism, Iraq's identity, and the shape of Iraq's democracy. The Baath party, which was irrevocably opposed to the new Iraq, and regional actors used these political differences to inflame sectarianism in order to bring down the new Iraq. To indicate the danger posed by the Baath party, the Prime Minister cited an intelligence report showing that of six key

BAGHDAD 00002021 002 OF 002

leaders of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, five were Baath party members and the sixth was an intelligence officer under Saddam. While many Baathists who were not criminals should be allowed to work in the government or receive pensions, the Prime Minister concluded, they could not be allowed into the security services.

16. (C) The Deputy Secretary told the Prime Minister that he had the support of the U.S. in what he was seeking to accomplish and that both sides needed to help each other. The Prime Minister reiterated that he did not expect progress on legislative priorities to change the reality in Iraq. The Deputy Secretary said that such progress would send a message that difficult issues could be dealt with by the political process rather than the use of force. One way of supporting national reconciliation, he concluded, was to make the legislative process work.

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